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Title: Erik Erikson Biography

Erik Erikson was a German Psychologist. Erikson was born in the year 1902. His mother belonged to a family of Jews from Denmark. There is not much information on the actual father of Erikson as his mother left him while Erikson was not born. One of the major concerns of Erikson throughout his life was of development of identity which resulted in his work on the same subject. Erikson initially was never interested in psychology. He was more interested in Latin, art, and history. Erikson’s stepfather adopted him in the year 1911. His stepfather wanted him to join medical school but he refused to do so. At the age of 25, Erikson went to Vienna to teach art and there his sensitivity towards children was noticed by his companions. They pushed him to educate himself in the field of psychoanalysis in Vienna. There, popular analysts would supervise his work.

Erikson did his training in psychoanalysis in the year 1933 which is the same year he shifted from Germany to the US and became the only one psychoanalyst for the children in the city of Boston at that time. While teaching at the medical school, Erikson also went to Harvard University in the year 1936. He wrote a book called ‘Childhood and society’ in the year 1950 because he was familiar with the children of different areas and environments (McLeod). From 1960 till his retirement, he taught human development at Harvard University.

Erikson was given an opportunity in 1973 to give a lecture in Jefferson Lecture which is the highest humanities achievement award in the United States. He also won the Pulitzer Prize as well as the U.S National Book Award for his work in the field of psychology. Erik Erikson was the first-ever person to invent the phrase “Identity crisis” which is still used to this day.

Erikson is famous for his theory of psychosocial development. According to this theory, human life is divided into 8 stages of development that span over from infancy until adulthood (Douvan). In each of the stages there comes a crisis or a task. These need to be resolved. In case of a successful resolution of these, the person gets a sense of achievement and competence that leads to a healthy personality. If there is a failure in achieving the task, the feeling of being inadequate hovers over the person.

The eight stages that have been described by Erikson on different stages of a person’s life are

* The element of trust vs the element of mistrust at the infancy stage of the person.
* Autonomy at the early childhood vs doubt.
* During the preschool years of the person whether there is an initiative or is there guilt.
* Industry or inferiority during the stage of school age.
* Role Confusion during the adolescent phase of the person or identity
* Isolation or intimacy at early adulthood
* Generativity vs stagnation in the middle age of the person
* In the old age is there Ego integrity or is their despair (Cherry)

Erikson belonged to the category of psychologists known as developmental psychologists. The main concern of such psychologists is to focus on the mental, social and physical processes that occur during the lifetime of a person and how such factors change over time. Some of the factors that are covered in the three dimensions include the development of identity, emotions, personality and motor skills. Normally these psychologists focus on the infants and children but now the field has expanded to accommodate all the classes of people. Such psychologists try to explain and study how and why the changes in humans occur over time.

Erikson’s works in the field of psychoanalysis and psychology remain of great value even today. These works are utilized by the psychologists of today to better understand the impact of different factors on the life of humans from start till end.

Works Cited

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McLeod, Saul. *Erik Erikson*. 2013.